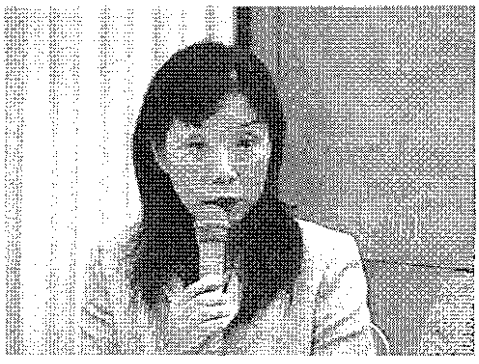
記録 : Transcript・Comment 1

Comments

Comment 1

Aya Yoshida
Professor, The National Institute of Multimedia Education



I am Aya Yoshida, at the National Institute of Multimedia Education. All the presentations are very interesting and very informative to me, and they gave us some clue to consider the future of VU in Japan. It is, however, hard for me to make comments on each presentation, so instead of presenting my ideas as comments, I would like to raise some questions to all of you to start a discussion session.

Even though VU, the online education, and "e-Learning" seem to be exchangeably used in the presentations, they commonly mean a set of education delivered through information technology, particularly through the Internet, and make two-way communication synchronously and asynchronously through the Internet possible. These words are born with increasing use of IT in education and seem to be very new. The style of education of each word, however, is distance education, as it were. Distance education themselves have long history and not necessary new to higher education. Regardless of it, why have these words been paid so much attention in recent years? What do these words bring new aspects to higher education world? We should think about this point first. Some says that e-Learning makes the teaching and learning process more convenient and more efficient, and some says that it is a magic tool to improve teaching and learning and raise the quality of education, and others say that it does not change education at all.

Before asking questions, I would like to briefly explain e-Learning in Japanese higher education. E-Learning in higher education has institutionalized in 1997. At that time only synchronous video conference was admitted as credited courses. It was 2001 when an asynchronous course through the Internet was admitted as a credited course. These two types of courses are allowed to provide up to sixty credits out of 124 credits, which are minimum undergraduate graduation requirements.

In this regulation, how large does e-Learning spread in Japanese higher education? According to my survey in 2002, approximately 15% of universities provide some

education through the Internet. And another 25% are planning to do so. It is, however, around 5 % of institutions which have credited Internet courses. These figures mean that approximately 40% of Japanese universities have a possibility to use the Internet in education but only small portion of them make them credited courses. This is the current situation in Japan.

So in this situation, we are not able to examine whether the models which are posed by Prof. Tanaka are fitted into Japanese social context. We would like to acquire some clues to consider and refine Tanaka's model for Japanese future higher education.
That is why I would like to ask some questions to all of you.

The first question is for Professor Ramirez. You mentioned that IT use on campus failed, but IT use off campus succeeded. It seems to me that this shows very essential points of E-Learning. Which factors are critical to determine failure and succeed? I wonder if you could explain the key reasons of the failure, not succeeding? For example, poor faculty development or deficit of LAN support systems, or student demands of education or whatever. This is the first question.

The second question is for Prof. Wilkinson. In your conclusion, you suggested that IT and group learning should be considered separately. If so, how can we consider them together and what relations are there between IT and this type of learning? For example, if we employ group learning in e-Learning, does that e-Learning easily succeed or if we use IT in group learning, does IT enhance group learning and help group learning succeed? This is my second question

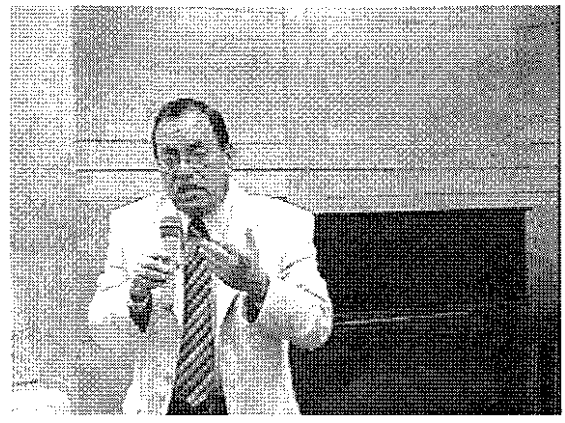
The third one is for Prof. Kempner. I would like to pose the same questions to you. You asked us that what problems did VU solve for Japanese higher education. As you know, we cannot answer your questions right now. So I will return your question to you again. What problems are VU solving for the US higher education? That is the third question.

(Ramirez)

From my point of view, the reasons for the failure of Information Technologies on campus (failure as a teaching-learning tool) are as follows:

But before let me say that in order for anyone to do something, at least three things are needed:

First, he/she needs to know how to do it, second, he/she needs to want to do it, and third he/she needs to be able to do it. Now,



why we have failed in using information technologies on campus for teaching and learning purposes?

Well, do professors know how to use these technologies for teaching and learning purposes? Surprisingly, many of them do not know how to use them; of course, they do know how to use the computer for writing research papers e-mailing or navigating on internet but for teaching and learning no idea. To be more precise, some professors use Power Point to create some slides with color but that is all.

But if that is the case, why we do not just provide professor with such courses? Indeed, we have done that, unfortunately not very successfully, not very successfully mainly because our university is a research-oriented university. And as Prof. Wilkinson said, in a research-oriented university, professors have incentives for doing research, not for teaching. And if learning these new information Technologies will require much more time for them to spend, professors do not want to get involved into the training courses.

Then, the problem seems to be that professors do not want to use these technologies. But when we ask them they answer that; "No, we want but we have no time".

Well, now the problem is that they can not do it because they have no time. And they have no time because their performance is evaluated not for good teaching but for good research; writing papers, attending conferences, applying for funds and grants and so on.

In addition to that, there is the problem of connectivity and the problem of availability. Connectivity in Mexican universities is not universal yet. Our university is proud of having the latest in computer equipment and still software for teaching and learning is rare. The problem of availability is also important because students complain that they cannot use a computer because there are not enough of them available; computer rooms are usually crowed most of the day.

However, I will say that this does not mean that Information Technologies will not be able to show its usefulness for pedagogical purposes, it only says that it is going to be very difficult, it is going to take a lot of effort. It is going to take a lot of time and creativity on the part of the professors to use this media.

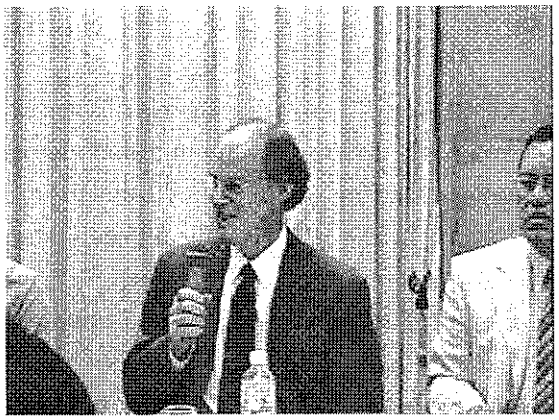
Now the success of other universities in distance education, I would say there are at least three reasons:

One of them is versatility in the use of media; by using internet, video, telephone, printed materials and other resources. The other is that they have expanded the population of potential students. So they offer courses to housewives, policy makers, employees and others. The third reason is cost; distance education has much lower cost than traditional education and for the providers of this kind of education.

Therefore, we should not forget that the success of distance education by electronic media is being basically economical. If all educational institutions want is money then

distance education can be a good choice. But if educational institutions want to improve the quality of the teaching learning process then this is going to take a little bit more time to do it. Thank you.

(Wilkinson)



Thank you for your question, Prof. Yoshida. You asked whether IT enhances group learning. I would say that it makes group learning more difficult or, to put it a different way, that if you use instructional technology you have to try extraordinarily hard to create the kind of group learning that one can more easily attain in a face-to-face classroom. There are certainly some advantages to instructional technology. You mentioned one of them—that is asynchronous use. Sometimes, for instance, questions will occur to a student after a class, and although professors complain at Harvard as well as at the University of the Americas about the extra time they have to put in answering e-mail, I think that e-mail is actually a very good enhancement. Some professors, in fact, use the e-mail questions that they receive from the students in order to shape their lessons for the next class meeting. So they read the e-mail and they understand better what the students have grasped and what they have not learned very well.

But for synchronous learning—and when you talk about online, distance learning, we are mostly talking about synchronous learning—I have to say that at least initially there are two major challenges for IT that do not exist in face-to-face instruction. The first challenge comes from the need somehow to allow each of the participants' access to every other participant, because this is a group effort after all. The students need to see each other; the teacher needs to see the students. For that to function well, the technical requirements are very great. What happens if the link to one or two students is interrupted? Now suddenly they are not learning anymore, not able to connect with the rest of the class. And the greater number of links you have, the greater chance you have of something going wrong. So I believe it is the necessity of continuous interaction that creates the principal challenge.

A second challenge for IT in a synchronous teaching mode is simply maintaining student interest. I think with genuine group learning that interest is already very high, but you do not want the technology to create a barrier. You want the energy created by the group to bring every member of the group into the inquiry that is underway, as in the

celestial navigation class I tried to show you in the video clip. So my short answer would be to say not only are these two separate but that to some degree instructional technology runs the risk of getting in the way of good group learning.

(Kempner)

I thought it was very clever of you to ask me my question back again. So let me give you a brief list of some of the issues I think that we are trying to solve in the United States.

My colleagues might disagree with me about the United States, but overall I would say it is economic. I think we have again as I said in my talk earlier, we have a decline of the student population, so we have increased competition for students. And many university administrators, and since I am an administrator, often it is based on greed; the idea to make more money.

And this is seen as a way to provide cheap instruction that may not always be as cheap as administrators think it is. But it is a way to get more tuition money out of new markets for students. I would say the first thing is a capitalistic notion for economic reasons.

The second one I would say is competition to become more modern. I think we have all talked about that to a certain extent that unless you are looking modern, you are not a real university, and so you have to have components that show that you are being highly technical, that you are offering classrooms, you have numbers of computers. This is not all bad, but sometimes it is competition just for the sake of competition not necessarily helping anybody's learning.

Another issue I would say would be professional education, and this is where the virtual university is probably very effective. That is, providing continuing education for doctors, or lawyers, or nurses, or professors, who already have their high status education. This is a way for them to get new information without having to come to the campus. So, this is actually I think a very good use of online learning and professional education.

Another reason or problem for trying to solve I hope, is to improve learning. There are ways the virtual university can provide access for both on campus students and off campus students, access to a world that they cannot get otherwise. So we would hope that one of the issues and motives is not only focused on economics but also focused on learning.

The final one and this was to be somewhat controversial, would be, is to protect the real university from other students. Universities that have enough students, universities

that do not have the capacity can use the virtual university as a way to give the appearance of providing access.

Here is the best example I can provide for this is not in the United States necessarily but in Thailand, the Open University was seen as a way to provide access to students without having to build new universities. It became very controversial in the idea that the students who could not get into the main universities were then doomed to the virtual university or the Open University, with the appearance that they were getting access.

We are beginning to do some of that in the United States, as well, and that greatly concerns me that it is the appearance of access to high status knowledge but potentially not. So those would be some quick answers.